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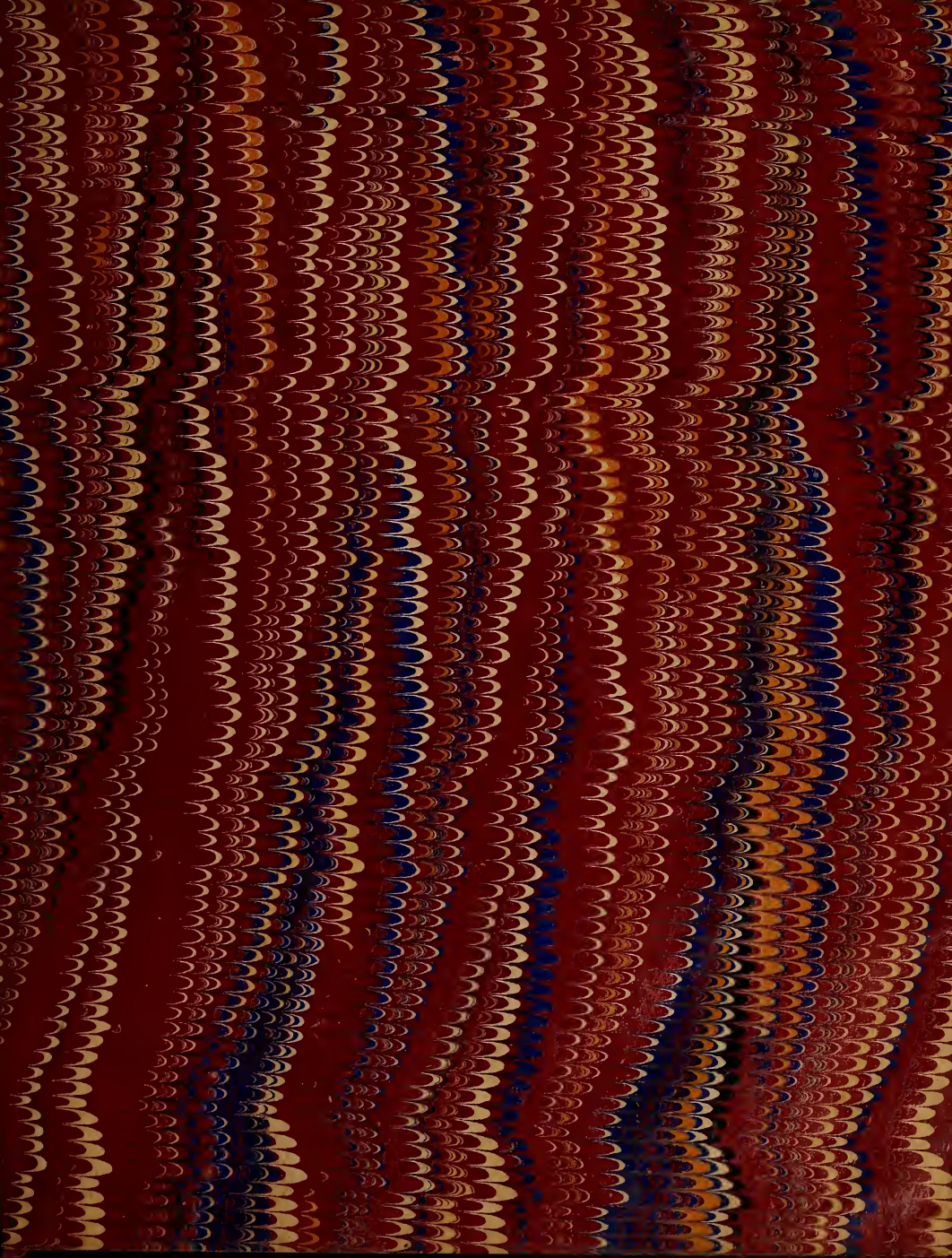
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GOOD SAMARITANS.

A POEM

BY

THOMAS BUCHANAN READ.



CINCINNATI:

ROBERT CLARKE AND COMPANY, PUBLISHERS.

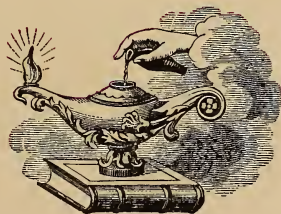
MDCCCLXVII.

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*Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1867, by
Thomas Buchanan Read,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, in and
for the Southern District of Ohio.*

*Written, delivered, and now published,
for the Benefit of the Good Samaritan Hospital,
of Cincinnati.*



PREFATORY.

THE considerate and liberal charity of Mess. Joseph C. Butler and Lewis Worthington, two of the younger business men of our City, has given to us, and for all the future, an Institution most properly named in their terms of dedication, the Hospital of the "Good Samaritan," and placed it in charge of the good sisters who have dedicated their lives to the holy uses of Charity in its most catholic sense, and whose brave, meek ministering, on the battle-field and in the infectious chamber, has made the "Sister of Charity" a name the synonym of love and goodness in all our hearts.

Sympathising, as a man and poet, to the fullest in the successful endowment of the Good Samaritan, T. Buchanan Read, responding to the request of the ladies directing and controlling the late Festival, and

catching inspiration from the holy influence of the good cause, composed and delivered his latest Poem, the "Good Samaritans," at the Festival, on two several evenings, to the wondering delight of all whose good fortune it was to hear him. Immediately after the close of the second evening, the manuscript was put up at public sale, and was purchased by SAMUEL M. MURPHY, ESQ., who now prints it for the benefit of the Hospital. Among all the minor Poems of Mr. Read, the "Good Samaritans" will ever hold first rank. It flows with the sweetness and fervor of a prayer. The following note from the Ladies' Committee is beautifully appreciative and appropriate.

G.

Cincinnati, 2nd May, 1867.

THOS. BUCHANAN READ, ESQ.,
Cincinnati.

DEAR SIR:—

Before the close of our Festival, and on behalf of the Good Sisters having charge of the Hospital of "The Good Samaritan," we return you our heartfelt thanks for the alacrity with which you came forward to donate your talents for the object of our Festival—in the composition and recitation of that beautiful Poem the "Good Samaritans," which you have now delivered for our great gratification.

Please accept the accompanying Bouquet as a token of our esteem, and hoping that your path through life may be often strown with such flowers as these, and as your pencil can delineate and your poetic imagery describe, we are, Dear Sir,

Very truly your friends,

"THE LADIES' COMMITTEE,"

*Of the Festival for the
Benefit of the Good Samaritan Hospital.*



GOOD SAMARITANS.

I.

FROM birth to death, Life's hard and dubious path,

Is set with many robbers:—Yet it hath

Its gentle ministers:—The loud turmoil

Robs us of rest, until we sink from toil

Amid the bordering blossoms, on the moss,

With head at ease against the wayside cross.

The lily-hooded sisters, we call flowers,

Soothe to repose and charm the weary hours,

Dispensing sweetness,—and the silent sense

Of duty done, their only recompense.
In shadowy nooks, these modest cloistered clans,
Oft tend our wounds, like good Samaritans.

II.

WHEN Care, the robber, noiseless as the air,
Steals on our steps, assailing unaware,
Then chant the birds in clear, celestial choirs,
And minstrel breezes wake their unseen wires;
The neighboring brooklet flashes, as on wings,
And where the way is roughest, loudest sings.
As if some angel touched the hidden keys,
The soul is filled with marvelous harmonies,
Full as the sky:—while all the vernal aisle
Of Earth's Cathedral, seems to thrill and smile.

Thus Care is foiled in many a thievish plan,
When Music comes—a good Samaritan.

III.

WAYLAID by Hunger, choked by heat
and dust,

Your scanty loaf, a dry and ashen crust,
Here bathe your temples in the trickling rill,
Till all the sense receives the grateful thrill;
Then to the shadowy arbor gaily mount,
And find a seat beside the bubbling fount,
Clear as the sky it mirrors:—Taste and learn,
How sweet the draught from the delicious urn!
Blest by the great High Priest, it flows for all,
Pure as the springs of Eden ere the fall,—

Priceless as Virtue,—freely thine and mine,—
A never failing cruise of Heaven's own wine,
Pressed from the cloudy vintage on the steep,
And cooled in sacred caverns dark and deep.
Here dip your crust and fill your thirsty can,
And drink and bless the good Samaritan.

IV.

WHEN sober Twilight, like a tollman gray,
Throws his dusk bar across the road of day,
Then chief appears the following thief, Fatigue,
Dogging your footsteps, many a dusty league,
Till Sleep, the evening angel, who attends
The toiling pilgrim—faithfulest of friends—
Comes with her oil and wine,—a holy balm

And on the forehead lays her prayerful palm ;
Then the great Veil is lifted and the soul
Beholds in dreams the traveler's long-sought
goal,—

Throws off the shackles, in this mimic death,
And freely breathes a more celestial breath.
Sleep, prophesying,—ministers to man,
And is indeed, a good Samaritan.

V.

BUT sterner ills assail the pilgrim's way ;
Misfortune marshals all her fierce array :—
The external wound—diseases swift or slow ;
And inward pangs which make no outward
show :—

From over-head the thunderbolt may fall,
While venomous reptiles round our pathway
crawl;

Or surer than the viper, or the storm,
With stealthy step comes Slander's loathsome
form;

Here like a ruffian, threats you with disgrace,—
Or lurks within a comrade's double face;
Until you turn with pain, to see him wear
The snaky horrors of Medusa's hair!

But lo, the steadfast friend!—with lifted arm
Averts the ill,—or binds the bleeding harm;
A sturdy form, that meets the dread attack,
Tho' dealt in front or basely at the back;
A guardian, worthy that best crown of ours,

Entwined for him in friendship's sacred bowers;
God's loving image speaks thro' all the man,
And christens him, a good Samaritan.

VI.

BUT number all the annoyers of mankind;
All the discomforts both of frame and mind;
Or picture, if you will, the direst fate,
Conjured by demons in their bitterest hate;
Be forced to wander o'er Saharas lone,
Whose sands can show no footprints but your
own;
Or starve, a martyr, in a dungeon cast;
Or shipwrecked, swing upon the ocean vast;
Let come disaster, in what form it will,

Pile Ossa woes on every Pelion ill;—
Look in your heart, one solace reigns unawed,
True as the pulse—the prayerful trust in God!
Secure, as when the soul her course began,
She holds within, this good Samaritan.

VII.

LIFE, like the Alpine passes, here and there,
Hath sanctuary harbors—builded where
The road is steepest, roughest, worst beset,—
Where bands of good Samaritans are met,
And minister to woe in every stage,
From nameless orphans up to tottering age.
Here dwell the Sisters, in their lily-hoods,
Beside the Cross, in sainted solitudes,—

Sinless and cheerful, as the birds and brooks,
Soothing the sufferer with kind words and
looks;

Their pure hearts flowing, like a crystal fount,
Fed from the vintage of God's holy mount:—
With palms as soft as slumber, in their sweep
Smoothing the tired eyelids unto sleep.

Unswerving friends, within a world of care,
Steadfast in toil and tireless in prayer;
They wait no pledge of nation, caste, or creed,
Enough to know you hunger or you bleed.

These are the holy moralists, who preach
In voiceless deeds, what words could never
teach.

All that we dream of angels—every good—

Meet in these noble types of womanhood!
Brave workers in the high redeeming plan,
Your sure reward is with the Great Samaritan.

VIII.

YET take a wider view and look abroad;
All charity is in the scope of God.
Relieve the ills of poor wayfaring man,—
Yet Earth hath pilgrims on a larger plan:
Behold the Nations on the world's highway,
Some bowed with chains,—some waiting to
 waylay:
There lie the weak before the conquering strong;
The fallen suffer, be they right or wrong.
'Tis not for us to stare them in the face,

With cheerless questionings of creed or race.
'Twas not for this that Heaven to us assigned
The highest empire, both of place and mind;
But ours the duteous privilege to arrest
The oppressor's anger and to raise the opprest:—
For this, here builded on the heights of Time,
The great Republic, facing every clime,
A sanctuary harbor stands! For this
Her storm-bell rings that none may go amiss.
Shall we, when tempests threaten thro' the lands,
Sit by the fire and nurse our glowing hands,
And smile to know that all our doors are barred?
Not so the watchful brothers of Bernard!
Shall Love, and Truth, and Charity,—sweet
three,

Count but their beads in pious revery?
Not so the hooded sisters stood but now,
When anguish knit the dying soldier's brow;
Thro' the loud field they sought the fallen form,
No matter what the flag that ruled the storm;
They knew no color—foreign tongues were
none—

All blood was red—disaster made all one!
Come, learn the noblest duty known to man,
My Country, and be thou a good Samaritan!

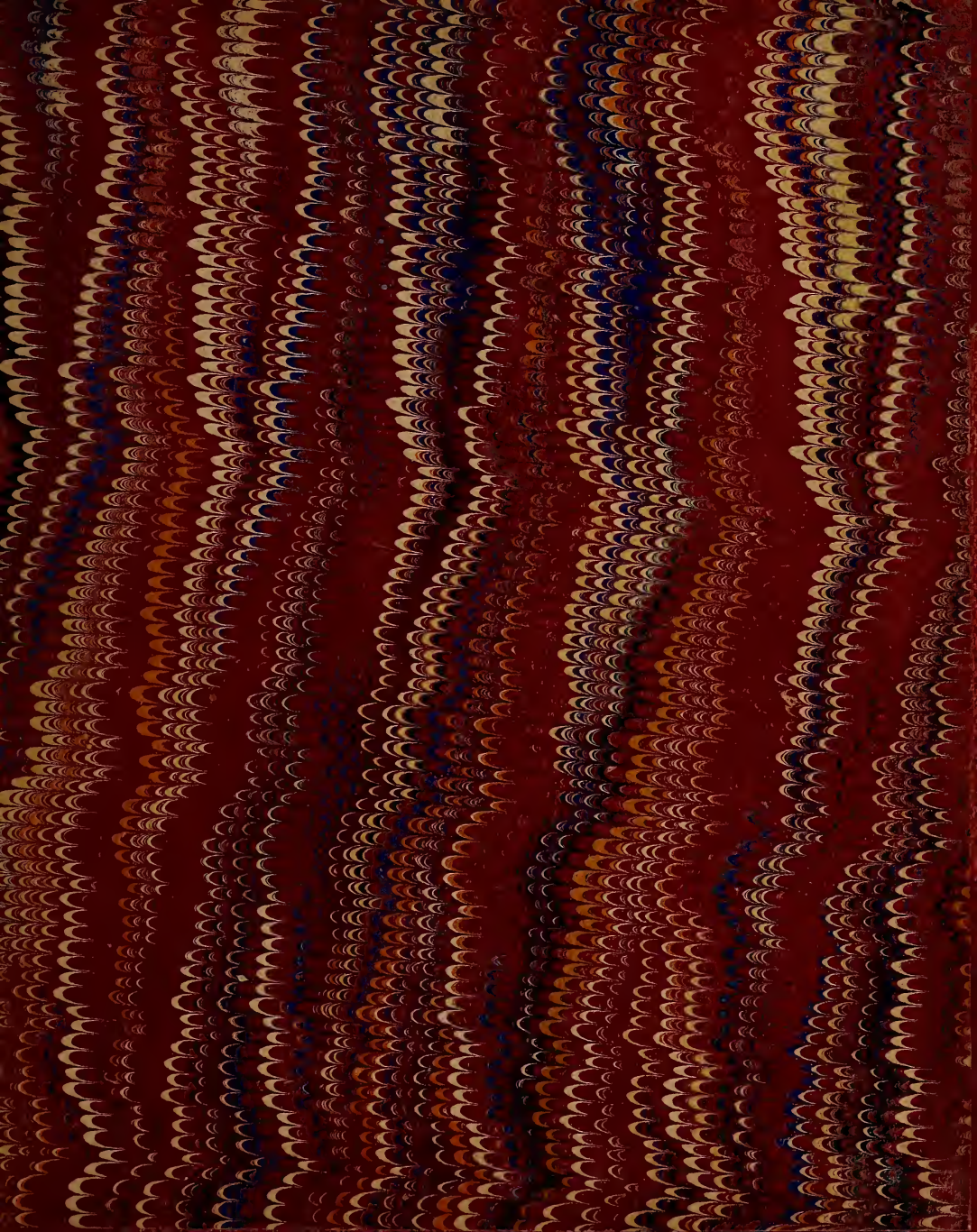


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